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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this model is the implementation of a multi-faceted Family Involvement-Communication System (FICS) which has as its major thrust the involvement of the family as active partners in school experiences. The model provides training and experiences. The model provides training and experiences for teachers, principals, parents, and graduate students in involvement and communicative skills, with special emphasis on the elementary school counselor as an ideal person to organize and coordinate a human relation "umbrella" approach to consulting services. The Native American Family Involvement-Communication System (NAFICS) is also presented as a theoretical model designed to assist low-income Native American families in developing their leadership potential in order to assume substantive roles as para-professionals working with other parents, teachers, and students. Goals of FICS include opening communication lines, assessment of family needs, and provision of practical experiences in parent involvement and communication skills for graduate students in education and psychology. (Author/SES)

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ABSTRACT

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT-COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (FICS)

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by

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Parents of poor children have often been silent bystanders in educational experiences administered to their children. This has generated feelings of inadequacy, alienation, and frustration which have ultimately led to feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness.

The purpose of this model is the implementation of a multi-faceted Family Involvement-Communication System (FICS) which has as its major thrust the involvement of the family as active partners in school experiences. The Goals are:

1. To open lines of communication between parents, teachers, and principals of different ethnic and economic backgrounds.

2. To assess family needs, concerns, and interests and to implement this input into the public educational system.

3. To provide families with assistance and information on child growth and educational practices.

4. To provide practical experiences in parent involvement and communication skills for student teachers, counselor-candidates and other graduate students in education and psychology, thereby allowing them to better understand the needs and attitudes of the target populations.

5. To delegate the responsibility of the continuation of FICS to low-income parents trained for substantive roles as para-professionals.

6. To provide for in-service or renewal strategies for teaching personnel.

The FICS model provides training and experiences for teachers, principals, parents, and graduate students in involvement and communicative skills. However, FICS is designed to be continued, with additional instruction and experiences conducted by those trained during the original period of operation.

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FAMILY INVOLVEMENT-COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (FICS)

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American public education, designed to educate all children, appears to be at a crisis point in the minds and attitudes of the public for several reasons:

1. There appears to be a lack of open communication between the educational system and public concerning the purposes of education.

2. There seems to be an almost total lack of communication with parents of children in regard to educational purposes as they relate to the curriculum of the school and to the known stages of child development.

3. There appears to be a total absence of public schools working in full partnership with families, particularly low-income families.

4. There seems to be a lack of recognition on the part of universities and colleges of the need for educationally related services to fit the realities of the communities they serve.

5. Finally, in rural areas, small elementary schools located in isolated communities serve as "feeder" schools for large high school districts. The further the attendance center is from the student's immediate community, the less sensitive the curriculum and instructional program is to the student's personal and/or educational needs, interests, and concerns.

Historically, uniformity in public schools was considered a guarantee to equal educational opportunity for all. However, the attempt to adjust a uniform educational process to a pluralistic society has resulted in the opposite. "Alienation, loss of cultural identity, human classification (slow, deprived, disadvantaged, with self-fulfilling prophecies), absenteeism, rebellion" are often the results of uniformity in public education.[1]

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[1]Mario D. Fantini, "Community Participation: Many Faces, Many Directions", Educational Leadership, 29: 679, May 1972.

The poor of our country are required to attend school. The school becomes a second home. Yet many poor, both children and parents, often view the schools with suspicion, if not hostility. The result produces a paradox: poor parents and children are pro-education though often anti-school.

Too often, low-income parents are silent bystanders in the educational experiences administered to their children. This has generated feelings of inadequacy, alienation, and frustration which ultimately leads to feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness.

The President's Task Force on Parent Participation states:

> The need for involvement by parents and family members is particularly great in public programs which serve children and youth. Parents have the same goals for their children as the agencies which administer these services. They want their children to be as free as possible from disease and disability, to get all the education they can absorb and profit from, and to live a useful and rewarding life. Often, however, they don't know how to reach these goals for their children. Public agencies, on the other hand, have not been as they should be because they have often neglected to involve the parents as planners and participants in their programs.
>
> The time has come to break down these walls of separation. Public agencies have a responsibility to open up the opportunities for participation, particularly for poor people and members of minority groups. The need is all the more urgent in today's complex world in which huge organizations, impersonality, and fragmented and specialized services seem to threaten the individual's sense of significance and self-esteem.[2]

Parental influence in the development of human efficacy has been established, both from theoretical perspectives and empirical data. The physical, social, emotional, and intellectual components of every human being have been determined to some extent by the influences of parents or parent substitutes. Since parents play a vital role in the formation of each subsequent generation, an informed adult population appears to be a prerequisite to the attainment of a democratic society which both ascribes to and facilitates the realization that each human being should achieve his fullest potential.

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[2]Task Force on Parent Participation, Partners as Parents in Department Programs for Children and Youth. A Report to the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, August, 1968.

In light of these conditions, it seems reasonable to propose a school-home involvement and communication system whereby low-income families can become actively involved in the education experiences of their young.

The FICS Model

In an attempt to enhance the coordination of educational services for poor children as well as to encourage consultation with and the education of adults who are involved with the development of children, a multifaceted approach under the title of Family Involvement-Communication System (FICS) is proposed. FICS attempts to make a difference in the academic, social, and emotional growth of economically deprived children through:

1. focusing on the family as a cohesive unit as opposed to suggesting another "parent program" which views the parent and child as separate entities,
2. providing renewal strategies in the form of inservice activities for school personnel as well as families,
3. implementing an open system that has congruence with basic tenets of democracy as opposed to suggesting another closed systems approach, and
4. emphasizing a human and interactive approach as opposed to a traditional public relations approach.

The FICS model is based on the concept that through joint concern and understanding, both educators and parents can work together in being responsive to the needs of society. By involving parents in active roles as para-professional working with other parents and teachers, an understanding of the educational objectives and needs will be enhanced. Parent involvement as defined by FICS, is an entirely new concept when compared to the information dissemination which has characterized traditional low-income parent-education programs.

Figure 1 is an attempt to present the FICS model schematically. The family, with the dual goals of communication and involvement, is the focal point of FICS. The interfaced arrows of the system express openness. Too often parent programs have dealt with only output to parents without due consideration of family "input."

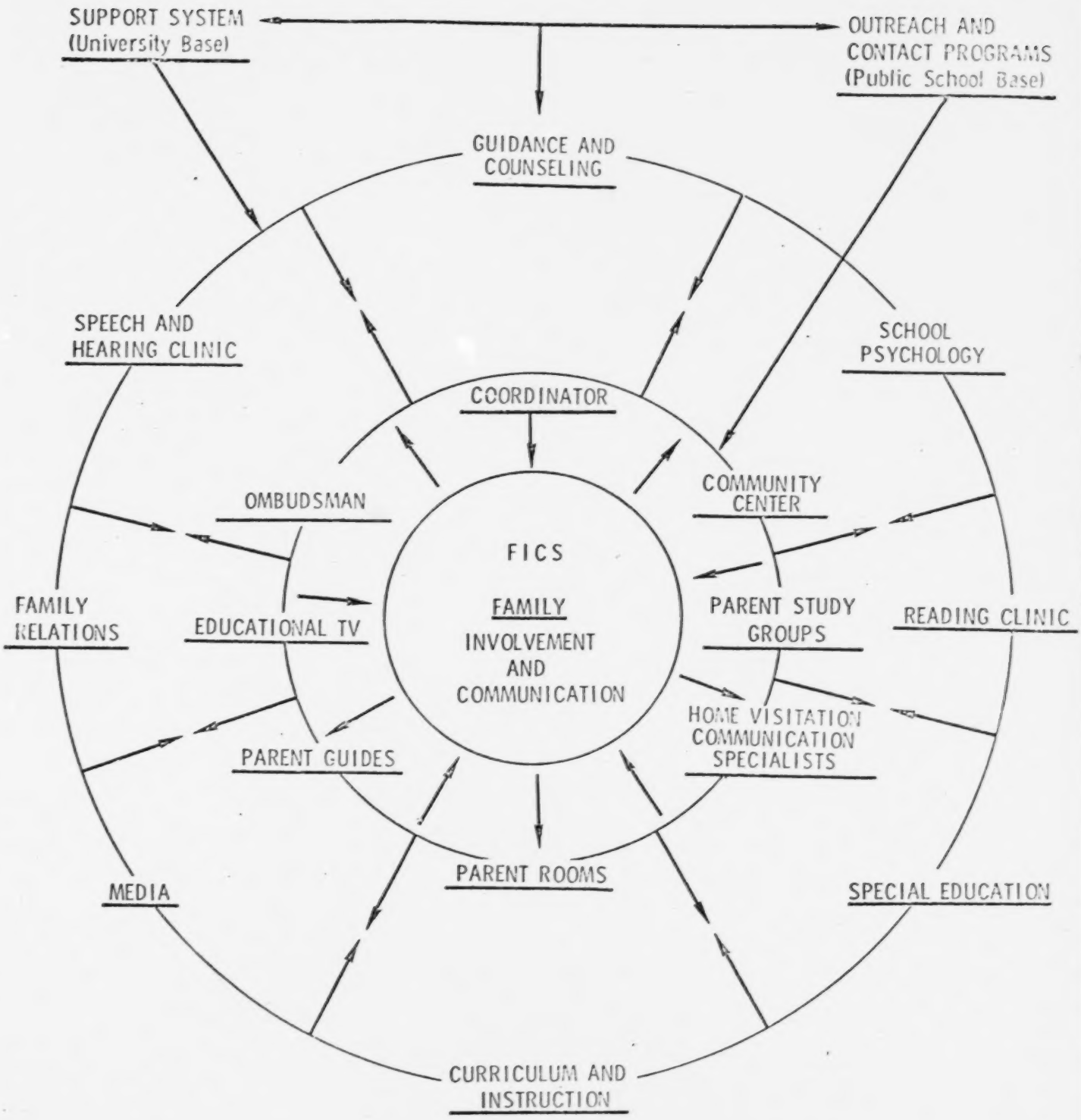

FIGURE 1 -- Family Involvement - Communication System (FICS)

FICS is based on the premise of doing "with" families as opposed to doing "for" families. The contact aspect of the model is public school or community based; while the support system is university or college based.

Outreach and Contact Program

A brief description of the components of FICS outreach and contact program is as follows:

1. Coordinator

The FICS Coordinator would coordinate the planning and activities of each of the components and insure that the activities maintain the original focus, low-income family involvement and communication. He would be instrumental in establishing a facilitative loop for youngsters as they are bussed across town to elementary schools or as they enter junior or senior high schools, yet return at the end of each school day to live in their own neighborhoods. The Coordinator also would serve as consultant to the staff concerning goals, needs and procedures.

2. Community Center

A Community Center would be developed to provide means for the parents of the community to act together in projects of common interests to their school and community. The program of the Community Center would be as broad as the needs and desires of the community dictate. Activities, not unlike the "pie supper" syndrome, would encourage the needed concept of the community being involved together.

Activities involving families within the Community Center could include projects in the following categories:

(a) Socio-civic-economic. Present materials on political and economic concerns, consumer education programs, forums on power identification and negotiation procedures.

(b) Home and Family Life. Facilitate child care seminars, nutrition workshops, 4-H Club activities, and Scouts.

(c) Recreation. Offer arts and crafts activities, social events, school plays.

(d) Special Interest. Offer English classes for non-English speaking parents, "Cooking with Commodities," and art exhibits.

The development of the Community Center would not involve the construction of separate physical facilities. School classrooms, the auditorium or a local church would be suitable for Community Center activities.

3. Parent Study Groups

The general purpose of these study groups would be to help parents understand their children and to develop more effective ways of relating with them. The discussions, therefore, would be directed toward applications and would be centered around ideas and needs identified by families.

A school counselor would organize the parent study groups. In order to provide for adequate participation, each group would be limited to 8 to 12 members. The sessions would be conducted for one hour each week for a period of ten weeks. The time scheduled for the meetings would depend upon the request for either daytime or early evening meetings. Parent study groups must be conducted in an area which permits the parents to face each other comfortably.

In an attempt to expand parent study groups so that a number of parents can be served, the counselor would be concerned with the development of a "parent-leader" group. This group would consist of parents who are particularly interested in the principles and who demonstrate skill in facilitating an understanding of children through group process.

A parent would serve as co-leader to become acquainted with the group and to note both group and individual reactions. The co-leader would have the opportunity to lead a complete session, with the counselor serving as an observer. Once parents have been trained as co-leaders, they would assume responsibility for newly formed groups. If difficulty is experienced with a group, the parent-leaders would consult with the counselor or invite him to visit a session.

4. Home Visitation-Communication Specialist

The Home Visitation-Communication Specialist is based on the premise that behavior, will change as a consequence of involvement and communication between parents and teachers, thus resulting in a more satisfying and productive school experience for students. Communication Specialist is the title given to a low-income mother or father who has taken part in FICS workshop training.

The duties of the Communication Specialist would be:

a. improving home-school communication through home visitations, and

b. attempting to help teachers gain an understanding of individual low-income pupils.

The Communication Specialist and teacher would form a team for home visitation purposes.

It is assumed that through FICS training and subsequent home visitation responsibilities, the Communication Specialists would become more involved in educational experiences and thus gain a sense of control over their environments. It is also hypothesized that through pupil home contacts and through personal involvement with the Communication Specialist, teachers' attitudes toward and understanding of low-income pupils would become more positive. As a result of these experiences provided to significant adults in his environment, it is further hypothesized that pupils' academic and social attitudes in school would improve.

5. Parent Room

The Parent Room would operate on the assumption that the following statements are true:

a. Human beings in general have the potential for helping themselves and others.

b. Normal, well-adjusted children also need to be guided in their thinking, their attitudes, and their personality development.

The Parent Room would be a resource room open to parents at stated times, including evening and weekend hours, and would have pamphlets, books, slides,

film strips, etc., chosen for their pertinence to the par s and children of each individual school. The Parent Room might also serve as an informal "drop-in center" in which parents may have a cup of coffee, pursue activities and discuss concerns relative to their personal lives.

The Parent Room might be housed in a mobile unit, a portable classroom, a corner in the school library, or a renovated utility closet. Parents selected to staff the Parent Room would be given workshop training in confidentiality, communication skills, child growth and development, school purposes, and community resources.

6. Parent Guides

A series of Parent Guides could be written with special emphasis placed upon the relationship of the developmental level of the child to school practices and curricula. These guides would be written in simple language; use cartoons; include quotes from youngsters; and perhaps deal with illustrative case materials. The tone of the guides would be such that older children and their parents may read and discuss them together. Care should be taken to adapt content to the type of living the community exemplifies - rural, city or small town.

7. Educational TV

Educational TV would allow for the dissemination of information concerning the purposes and progress of FICS, contemporary educational practice and thought, and child growth and development practices. A series of video tapes could be made for the purpose of local, state and national information dissemination.

8. Ombudsman

The Ombudsman would serve as a liaison between school, the home, and the community. He or she will assist families upon their request, in any way possible relative to the education and social experiences of their youngsters. The Ombudsman will serve as a "trouble shooter" in assessing and solving shared concerns.

9. Family Advisory Board

A Family Advisory Board, composed of parents, should be established at the outset of a family involvement project. A vital function of the Board would be to identify needs and concerns and to make subsequent input into the program. Hopefully, the Board would become the nucleus for assuming the leadership responsibility necessary for the maintenance and continuation of FICS components.

Support System

Higher education institutions would provide both professional and student personnel. Student teachers, practicum counselors, interning school psychologists and administrators would be involved in providing services in at least one of the FICS outreach and contact components. Expertise from the university would be utilized on a contract basis according to the needs identified by the families and the contact staff. In other words, it is not the function of the university or college to identify the unique needs of individual communities, but simply to facilitate goals at the "grass-roots" level through a cooperative effort of public school personnel and community representatives. Thus, elimination of the ivory tower syndrome, a barrier to potential social service.

Educational services related to school age children are diversified and overlapping on higher education campuses. There is a need for an "umbrella arrangement" to coordinate these services in order to focus upon the educational growth of youngsters and to provide information and assistance to families who are experiencing both normal and problematic growth.

Implementation

Too often home-school communication has been perceived as:

1. Teachers criticizing students and parents as not being cooperative when there are discipline problems or when assigned tasks are left undone.

2. Parental conflicts with the school or school conflicts with the home are frequently assessed as a lack of cooperation.

3. The cooperative parent is often identified as one who stays home, is sometimes seen, but never heard.

4. The cooperative principal and teacher make everybody happy.[3]

Traditionally, many schools have viewed their function as assuming total responsibility for the educational growth of students and cooperation as a process, whereby, parents were minimally informed as to the educational growth being made by their children. Ira Gordon[4] has identified five levels of parental involvement: (1) audience; bystander-observer, (2) teacher of the child, (3) volunteer, (4) trained worker, and (5) participants in decision-making, especially through advisory board membership. The FICS program is a systematic procedure, whereby, principals and faculties can implement a family involvement program that reflects participation at all levels as identified by Gordon.

However, any educator who has participated in innovation will readily recognize that it is one thing to construct theoretical models or "paper programs," but quite another to implement the theories. There are certain realities unique to any particular school setting, which the alert administrator will take into consideration as he/she begins a family involvement program. The FICS model is not presented as a panacea for all situations, but simply as a model subject to modification according to the needs of individual communities.

Therefore, four alternative procedures for implementation of a FICS program are suggested:

1. Slow Implementation - This approach is recommended where certain constraints exist that cause the principal to deem caution necessary where innovation is concerned. One or two components can be selected and implemented

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[3]A. Gray Thompson, "Organizing for Home-School Cooperation," Catholic School Journal, September, 1968, p. 68.

[4]Ira J. Gordon, Parent Involvement in Compensatory Education, University of Illinois Press: Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, 1970.

to test their contribution to the overall school program. This approach has been used successfully in several school systems in Oklahoma by initiating Parent Rooms, Parent Study Groups, and Home Visitation-Communication Specialists. If the administrator is utilizing slow implementation, which reflects caution, certainly he would want to determine the level at which he is willing to involve parents in the educational program. Inservice workshops for parents and teachers are mandatory.

2. Total Implementation - In utilizing the "total implementation" approach, caution is recommended. To undertake a massive endeavor requires careful planning with and training of parents. Inservice arrangements need to be made with professionals from higher education. Six months to one year should be spent in preparatory activities prior to total implementation of FICS.

3. Parent-Teacher Organization - This procedure is recommended for schools that have an active Parent-Teacher Organization, and an administrator who is capable of delegating or sharing decision-making power. The PTO would assume major responsibility for implementation of the FICS program. This approach could make use of any one or all three of the other suggested approaches to implementation.

4. Selection - The FICS model will not, nor was intended, to fit the needs of all communities. Therefore, this suggested procedure is simply a process of selecting those components of FICS that meet immediate needs of the community and implementing them. Once again, inservice training for parents and teachers is an integral part of the successful implementation of FICS.

Many creative administrators, along with their faculties, have developed their own successful strategies for developing school-home-community programs. The model set forth here and suggested alternatives for implementation are not presented as necessarily the only or best. However, FICS is one model that has

proved useful in:

1. Presenting a comprehensive systematic program for family involvement and communication in the school experience, and

2. Serving as a guide or catalyst to principals and faculties in either developing or upgrading existing family programs.

Summary

In the final analysis, the FICS model provides training and experiences for teachers, principals, parents and graduate students in involvement and communication skills. However, FICS is designed as an on-going program, with additional instruction and experiences conducted by those trained during the original period of operation.

If past parent programs have not been as successful as they might have been then it is time to look for alternative models for actively involving parents in the school experience of their young. The FICS model is one such alternative.

ABSTRACT

FICS: An Expanded View of Counselor Consultation

by

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Consultation with parents, administrators, and teachers has been established as one of the elementary school counselor roles designed to facilitate home-school communication. In order to facilitate positive communication between home and school, the counselor must enlist the cooperation of the "people resources" within the school community. The Family Involvement Communication System (FICS), a multi-faceted model for family involvement, enables the counselor to coordinate concomitant consulting services within the school. FICS does not remove the counselor from the consultant role but allows him to function as a trainer, coordinator, and resource for varied consulting programs.

The elementary school counselor by virtue of his role of helping children grow toward their full potential, seems the ideal person to organize and coordinate a human relations "umbrella" approach to consulting services. The separate components of FICS are: case study, child study groups, home visitation-communication specialist, case conference, parent room, teacher inservice seminars, and guidance committee. Although these components are not original with the model, FICS provides a comprehensive approach and participatory experiences for parents and school personnel.

FICS offers the elementary counselor an alternative procedure to the traditional hit-and-miss consulting role. Hopefully, the educational growth of youngsters will be enhanced through providing information and assistance to families who are experiencing both normal and problematic growth.

FICS: AN EXPANDED VIEW OF COUNSELOR CONSULTATION

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Increased emphasis upon active parental involvement in the school experience of their young provides elementary school counselors unlimited opportunity for making a difference in the social, emotional and academic growth of youngsters. That young children grow as a consequence of interaction with their total environment has been established through theoretical perspective and empirical data. Traditionally, however, educational programs have not been designed for interaction with the child's total environment. Teachers too often have told parents to bring their children to the school door and leave.

Consultation with parents, administrators and teachers has been established as one of the elementary school counselor roles designed to facilitate home-school communication. Too often parent consultations have become strictly crisis or remediation oriented, due to the lack of time and other role priorities established by the counselor, the administrator or the faculty.

In order to facilitate positive communication between home and school, the counselor must gain and enlist the cooperation of the "people" resources within each school community. The Family Involvement-Communication Systems (FICS), a multi-faceted model for family involvement, allows the counselor to coordinate concomittant consulting services within the school. FICS does not remove the counselor from the consultant role but allows him to function as a trainer, coordinator, and resource of varied consulting programs.

Parent Involvement

Active involvement of the total family in the school experience has been shown to be related to academic, social and emotional growth of students. Rankin (1967) studied the relationship between parent behavior and achievement of

inner-city elementary school youngsters and found substantial differences between the attitudes and behaviors of mothers of high-achieving and low-achieving children. The mothers of high-achieving children were better able to discuss school matters and to initiate conferences with school officials.

Parent involvement in the school not only is associated with student attitutes and behaviors, but also seems to influence teacher attitudes toward students. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) stated that students who profited from positive changes in teachers' expectations of their ability all had parents who were involved in their child's school development and who were visible to the teachers.

Cloward and Jones (1963) studied low-income, working-class families and confirmed the effect of minority status and social class on the belief that work and education will result in economic and social mobility. They concluded that parents of all socio-economic classes who participated in school experiences were likely to believe that the school and education could actually effect change in their children.

In an investigation of the effects of parent-school personnel contacts on student achievement, Schiff (1963) concluded that parents participation and cooperation in school affairs lead to increased pupil achievement, better school attendance, improved study habits and fewer discipline problems. An analysis of gains on a reading test which was administered to experimental and control groups of students revealed that children of the experimental (parent-participation) group improved significantly more than did children of the control group.

Goals of FICS

Empirical evidence supports the necessity for developing an open communication system whereby families can become actively involved in educational experiences of youngsters. The elementary school counselor, by virtue of his

role in a comprehensive approach to helping children grow toward their full potential, seems the ideal person to organize and coordinate a human relations "umbrella approach" to consulting services.

Goals inherent in the Family Involvement Communication System (FICS) are:

1. to implement an open involvement and communication system between counselors, parents, teachers, and administrators;
2. to emphasize a human interactive approach as opposed to a traditional public relations approach;
3. to involve parents in active roles as para-professionals working with other parents and teachers; and
4. to provide teacher revewal strategies in the form of demonstrations and in-service activities.

A conceptual framework of FICS is presented in Figure 1. The separate components of FICS are 1) Case Study, 2) Child Study Groups, 3) Home Visitation -Communication Specialist, 4) Case Conference, 5) Parent Room, 6) Teacher In-service Seminars, and &) Guidance Committee. Though these components are not original with the model, FICS provides a comprehensive approach to and experiences for parents and school personnel. The counselor may wish to initially implement one or two of the FICS components and subsequently add others until the total program is operationalized.

Case Study. The case study method may be implemented in redirecting the teacher's focus from imparting subject matter to include the need for understanding each individual student. The counselor will serve as a resource to teachers and/or administrators who wish to prepare a case study for the purpose of fostering better adjustment of a pupil. When data about a student has been collected, a case report would be written, including tentative hypotheses and plans of treatment. The teacher and/or administrator may present the case to other teachers, in order to secure their reactions and suggestions before

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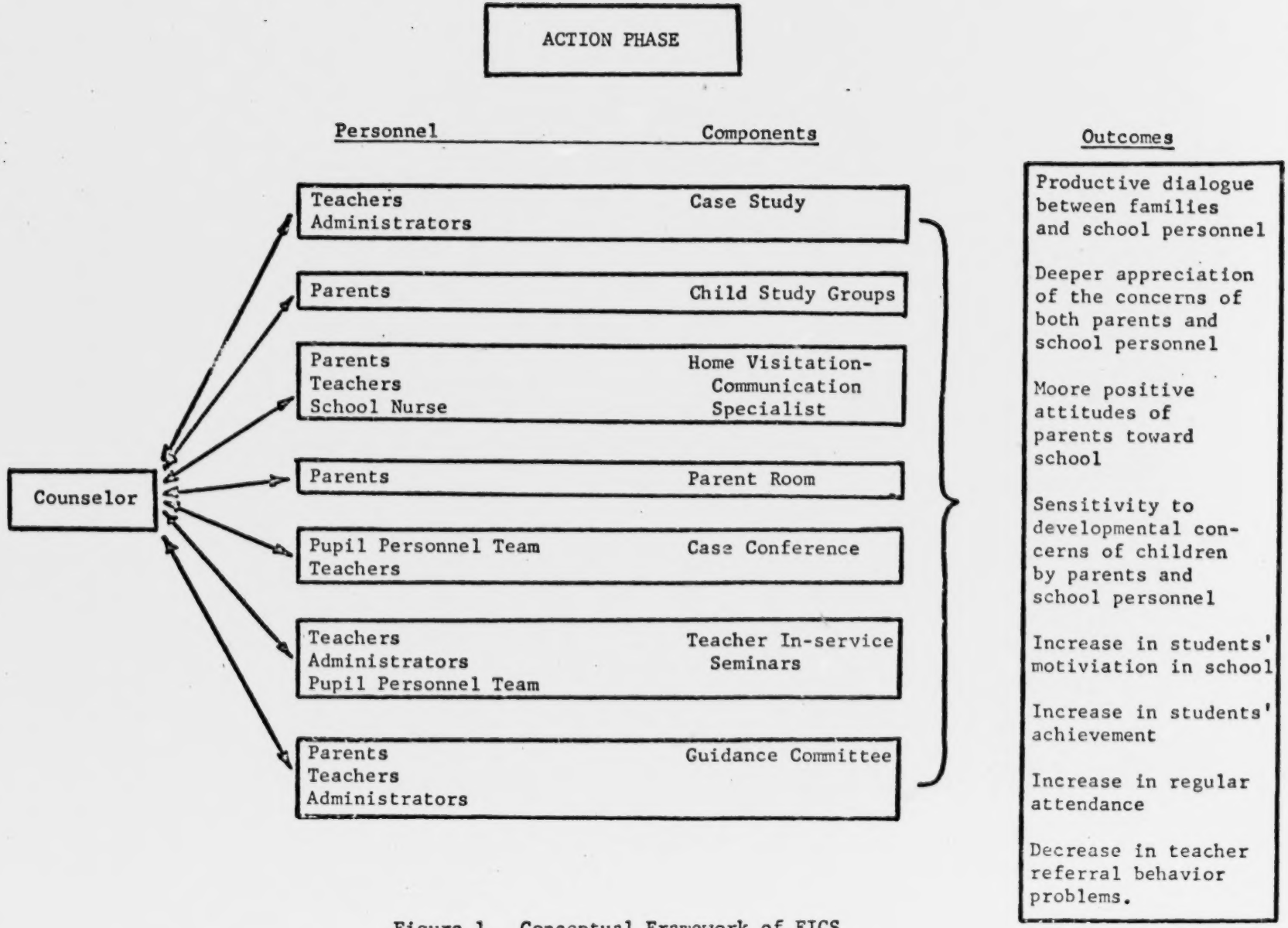

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of FICS

proceeding with his plan of action. Case studies provide teachers an opportunity to explore alternatives relative to situations involving students, thus enhancing teacher understanding of child growth and development

Child Study Groups. Dinkmeyer and Caldwell (1970) suggest that child study groups help parents understand their children and develop more effective ways of relating with them. Discussions in the study groups are directed toward practical applications. Printed material might be used by the leader as a focal point in stimulating discussion.

The opportunity to participate in child study groups may be announced at a general PTA meeting or through notices sent home with children. Dinkmeyer and Caldwell (1970) suggest that each group be limited to a maximum of 12 members.

One child study group would be conducted by the counselor for one hour each week for a period of 6 to 10 weeks. A lounge at school, a meeting room in a neighborhood church, or the home of a participant may serve as the meeting place.

In an attempt to expand child study groups so that a number of parents can be served, Dinkmeyer and Caldwell (1970) suggest that the counselor be concerned with the training of parents who will function as future group leaders. Parents in the original group who demonstrate interpersonal skills could serve as co-leaders. The co-leaders would have the opportunity to lead a session, with the counselor serving as observer. Once parents have served successfully as co-leaders, they assume responsibility for newly formed groups and in turn train other co-leaders. If a problem develops, the leaders and co-leaders would consult with the counselor or invite him to visit a session

Home Visitation-Communication Specialist. The Home Visitation-Communication Specialist component is based upon the premise that student behavior will change as a consequence of involvement and communication between parents and teachers.

Communication Specialist is the title given to a mother or father trained in communication and home visitation skills. The function of the Communication Specialists would be to improve home-school relationships through three home visitations each week. The Communication Specialist, teacher, and possibly the school nurse, would form a team for visitations to one or two selected homes each month.

The rationale for this component is: (1) through FICS training and subsequent home visitation responsibilities, the Communication Specialists will become more involved in the educational experience of all children, including their own, (2) through student home contacts and through personal involvement with the Communication Specialist, teachers' awareness of students' environments will increase, thus leading to more positive teacher attitudes; and (3) through these experiences provided to significant adults in their environments, students' school attitudes and academic performance will improve.

The counselor would provide workshop training for the Communication Specialists in order to acquaint them with the philosophy, policies and procedures of the school, child growth and development and community resources. In addition, competencies in verbal and non-verbal communication skills and interview techniques would be specified.

Parent Room. The parent room, operated by counselor-trained parents, is based upon the following assuption: human beings have the potential for helping themselves and others, provided they have appropriate information for increasing awareness of available alternatives.

The parent room (a mobile unit, a portable classroom, a corner in the school library, or a renovated utility closet) would be a resource room open to parents at stated times, including evening and weekend hours. Parents selected to staff the parent room would be given training by the counselor in communication skills, child growth and development, school purposes, and community resources.

Parent room helpers would not only disseminate information selected for its pertinence to the particular school population, but also would serve as a liaison between family and school and family and community.

The parent room might serve as an informal "drop-in center" in which parents may have a cup of coffee, pursue activities and discuss concerns relative to their personal lives. These activities could reflect a broad spectrum ranging from engaging in a hobby to relating a family crisis. In a crisis situation the parent room para-professionals would act as referral agents to the counselor.

Case Conference. Case conferences bring together personnel on a monthly basis in order to pool information concerning an individual student's observed problems and to plan and coordinate services designed to meet his needs. Case conferences may include the student's teachers, administrators, and members of the Pupil Personnel Team, such as the counselor, school psychologist, social worker, nurse, speech therapist and reading teacher. Each person involved in the case conference offers information or impressions of the student in question. The case conference not only allows for the needs of an individual child to be clarified and an organized plan to be implemented, but through participation, provides valuable in-service training for participants, especially teachers.

Teacher In-Service Seminars. Through monthly seminars a counselor may facilitate teachers' guidance awareness. Dinkmeyer and Caldwell (1970) state that seminars offer the counselor an opportunity to serve as an agent of change. Van Hoose (1968) encourages the counselor to provide information that the teachers may incorporate into their daily interactions with children and to offer viable alternatives rather than to deal in generalities.

Specific in-service seminar topics would be determined by the needs of teachers and students. Possible areas are:

(1) Role Playing parent-teacher conferences with feedback from the faculty

concerning the type of interpersonal relationship established, the learning on the part of both the teacher and the parent, and the potential benefit derived by the child.

(2) Career guidance. What is it? Who is involved? How is it done?

(3) Value clarification in the classroom. Specific value clarification strategies which can be used by a teacher in helping children look at their values would be demonstrated and discussed.

The counselor may lead the seminars and/or may call upon school or community personnel to offer assistance in conducting meetings. Video-tapes and other media may be used to stimulate discussions.

Guidance Committee. An effective elementary school guidance program needs direction and involvement (input, feedback, and action) from administrators, teachers, and parents. According to Nelson (1972), a guidance committee can provide a vehicle for conducting open forums on topics relating to parent and teacher involvement in the guidance program.

The six to ten member guidance committee would meet four times a year and would serve as a medium through which a counselor can explain and interpret his roles and receive feedback about the impact of the guidance program. The guidance committee can also help the counselor assess the present and possible future needs of the school's guidance program.

Summary

The Family Involvement-Communication System (FICS) model provides a human relations "umbrella approach" for parent and teacher input and participation in a school's elementary guidance program. Too often teacher-parent and counselor-parent consultations have dealt with only "output" to parents without due consideration of family "input".

FICS offers the elementary counselor an alternative procedure to the traditional "hit and miss" consulting role. FICS is designed as an on-going

consultative services program in which the counselor functions as the initial trainer of para-professionals, and as coordinator and resource. Hopefully, the educational growth of youngsters will be enhanced through providing information and assistance to families who are experiencing both normal and problematic growth.

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NATIVE AMERICAN FAMILY INVOLVEMENT-COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (NAFICS)

by

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Parents of low-income Native American children in Oklahoma (and other states) have often been silent bystanders in educational experiences administered to their children. This has generated feelings of inadequacy, alienation, and frustration which have ultimately led to feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. Native American expertise must be nurtured and encouraged of autonomy is to become a reality among low-income Native American people.

NAFICS is a theoretical model which, through field testing, would provide training and experiences for public school personnel, parents, children, and graduate students in active democratic involvement and communication in the extended school community. NAFICS is designed to be continued, with additional instruction and experiences conducted largely by those Native Americans trained as para-professionals during an original period of operation.

The long-range goals of NAFICS are:

1. To assist low-income Native American families, both parents and children, in developing their leadership potential so that they may assume substantive roles as para-professionals working with other parents, teachers, and students.

2. To extend and enhance the educational aspirations of low-income Native American youth.

3. To provide low-income Native American adults a system for becoming actively involved partners in the curricular and extra-curricular school experiences of their children.

4. To develop viable community health services for low-income Native American families residing in rural areas.

NAFICS: Native American Family Involvement-Communication System

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"...I know that my race must change. We cannot hold our own with the white men as we are. We only ask an even chance to live as other men live. We ask to be recognized as men. Let me ask that the same law shall work alike on all men. Let me be a free man--free to travel, free to stop, free to trade, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to think and talk and act for myself--and I will obey every law, or submit to the penalty..."

--Chief Joseph

These words were spoken almost 100 years ago by Chief Joseph, leader of the Nez Perce tribe, western Indians once exiled to Oklahoma's Indian Territory. The low-income Native American in Oklahoma today faces many of the problems of the 1870's--poverty, exploitation, and discrimination. He is torn between two worlds, two cultures.

Oklahoma has no Indian reservations although its Native American population is exceeded by only one other state. Since there are no reservations in the state, low-income Native American people have tremendous pressure placed upon them to make the transition from their traditional Indian culture to the dominate white culture.

Public schools attened by low-income Native American children have generally held classes on rigid schedules; encouraged competition among peers as the prime form of motivation, suppressed native languages requiring English as the language for teacher and student and maintained discipline with authoritarian (not democratic) methods. Rigid schedules, competition,

and so on, are foreign to Native American value systems. Thus, current public educational practice cannot necessarily be viewed as methods for developing upward economic mobility for low-income Native Americans, but in many respects can be interpreted as a weapon of subjugation.

Concomitantly, low-income Native Americans have been treated as if they are incapable of managing their own affairs. A certain amount of expertise is a prerequisite to all smooth-running operations and spokesmen for Native Americans agree they need assistance in solving some of their problems. Such "assistance," however, is misinterpreted by non-Indians who try to take over and manage their affairs. The paternalistic practices of some educators have a tendency to frustrate and inhibit the maturity of low-income Native Americans. A lack of confidence in the abilities of the low-income Native Americans to solve their own problems contributes to the deterioration of the Indian self image. Indian expertise must be nurtured and encouraged if autonomy is to become a reality among Oklahoma's low-income Native American people.

Since statehood, uniformity in public schools located in Oklahoma, was considered a guarantee to equal educational and economic opportunity for all. However, the attempt to adjust a uniform educational process to a pluralistic society has resulted in the opposite. Low-income Native American children are required by State law to attend school. The school becomes a second home. Yet dialogue with many low-income Native Americans, both parents and children, demonstrates that they often view the schools with suspicion, if not hostility. However, these same people indicate that they desire an education. The results produce a paradox: low-income Native American parents and children are pro-education though often anti-school.

In light of the foregoing conditions, it seemed imperative to design a school-home communication system whereby low-income Native American families

residing in rural Oklahoma, can become active partners in the educational experiences of their young. The Native American Family Involvement-Communication System (NAFICS) is designed to be implemented in Oklahoma (or other states) where heterogeneous public school populations present special concerns to school personnel in facilitating the social, emotional, physical and intellectual development of all children and youth.

Gordon (1970) suggests five levels of involving parents in public school: (1) audience, bystander-observer, (2) teacher of child, (3) volunteer, (4) trained worker, and (5) participants in decision-making i.e. through advisory board membership. Most attempts at involving parents in school programs have been at level one. The implementation of NAFICS would facilitate family participation at levels two through five.

Goals of NAFICS

The long-range goals of NAFICS are:

1. To assist low-income Native American families, both parents and children, in developing their leadership potential so that they may assume substantive roles as para-professionals working with other parents, teachers, and students.

2. To extend and enhance the educational aspirations of low-income Native American youth.

3. To provide low-income Native American adults a system for becoming actively involved partners in the curricular and extra-curricular experiences of their children.

4. To develop viable Community Health Services for low-income Native American families residing in rural areas.

Presentation of the Model

In order to coordinate educational services provided for low-income Native American children, as well as to encourage consultation with and the education of adults who are involved with their growth and development, a

multi-faceted approach under the title of Native American Family Involvement-Communication System (NAFICS) is proposed. NAFICS attempts to make a difference in the academic, social, and emotional growth of low-income Native American children through: (1) focusing on the family as a cohesive unit; (2) providing renewal strategies in the form of demonstrations and in-service activities for school personnel and low-income Native American families; (3) implementing an open communication system congruent with the basic tenets of democracy; (4) emphasizing a human and interactive approach; and (5) involving the family (parents and children) in the educational experience to the extent that they become an integral part of the total activity.

The NAFICS model assumes that through joint concern and understanding, both educators and parents will cooperate and together become more responsive to the needs of children and the needs of society. By involving Native Americans in active roles as para-professionals working with other parents, teachers, and students an understanding of the educational objectives and needs would be enhanced. Parent involvement, as defined by NAFICS, is an entirely new concept when compared to information dissemination which has characterized traditional low-income parent-education programs. NAFICS is based upon the premise of doing "with" families as opposed to doing "for" families.

Figure 1 is an attempt to present schematically the NAFICS model. As can be seen by viewing Figure 1, the family, with the dual goals of communication and involvement, is at the center of NAFICS. The interfaced arrows of the system express openness. The three major components of the model are: (1) Parent Advisory Council (community based), (2) Outreach and Contact Program (school-community based), and (3) Support System (university based).

Professional personnel required for the implementation of NAFICS are: (1) a Coordinator-Ombudsman, (2) Community Health Nurse, and (3) a Counselor.

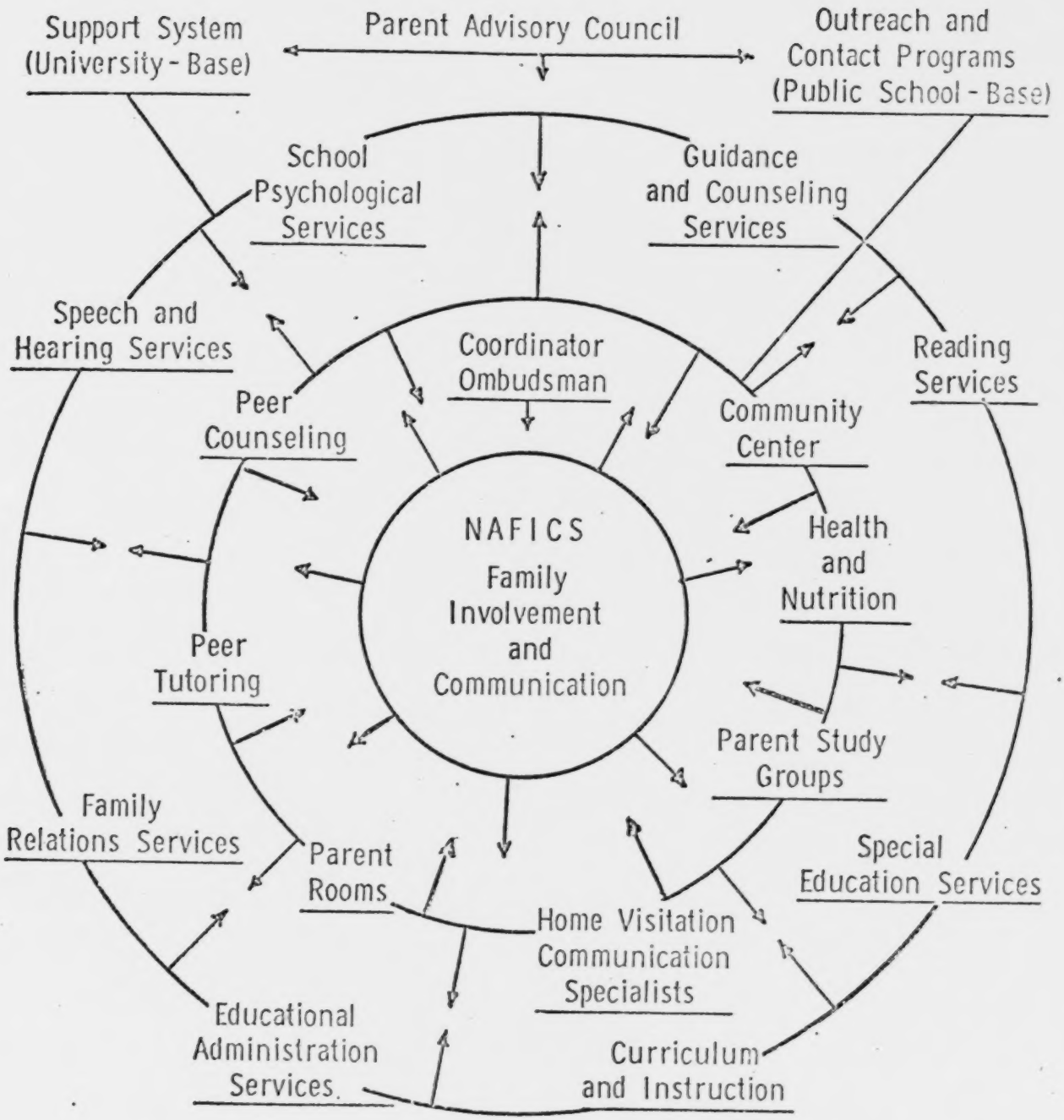

Figure 2 - Native American Family Involvement - Communication System

Graduate students would be assigned to assist in the training of Native American para-professionals and in the implementation and evaluation of the NAFICS program.

The Native American para-professionals trained in involvement and communication skills would have the major contribution in the actual implementation and continuation of NAFICS. By the end of a 12-month period of operation the NAFICS professional staff would serve only in consulting and coordination capacities. The NAFICS trained para-professionals would assume major responsibilities in training and supervising other Native Americans in order to assure the continuation of NAFICS.

Parent Advisory Council

A Parent Advisory Council (PAC), composed of Native American parents and two representatives from Oklahoma State University, would be established at the outset of the program. The PAC would meet bi-monthly and Native American Council members would receive a stipend for attendance at the meeting.

The PAC would participate in interviewing and employing staff personnel. The NAFICS Coordinator-Ombudsman will report directly to the PAC. The PAC would be the final voice of authority in all matters concerning the program and would be involved in the ongoing evaluation of the project.

A vital function of the PAC would be to identify needs and concerns and to make subsequent input into the program. Hopefully, the PAC would become the nucleus for identifying and/or assuming the leadership responsibility necessary for the maintenance and continuation of NAFICS.

NAFICS Outreach and Contact Program

Coordinator-Ombudsman. This person would coordinate the activities of the NAFICS sub-components and related personnel and insure that these activities maintain the original focus, family involvement and communication. In addition, a major part of his mission would be that of an educa-

tional liaison. He would assist parents, upon request, in any way possible relative to the educational experience of their youngsters. He would be instrumental in establishing a facilitative loop for youngsters as they enter consolidated high schools from the rural independent elementary school districts.

Community Center. A Community Center would be developed to provide means for Native American families to act together in projects of common interests to their school and community. Activities, not unlike the "pie supper" syndrome, would encourage the needed concept of the community being involved together.

Activities involving families could include projects in the following categories:

(a) Socio-civic-economic--Establishment of materials on political and economic concerns, consumer education programs, focuses on power identification, negotiation procedures;

(b) Home and family life--Nutrition workshops, 4-H Club activities, scouts, cooking with commodities; and

(c) Recreation--Arts and crafts, social events, school plays.

Parent Study Groups. The general purpose of these study groups would be to help parents understand their children and to develop more effective ways of relating with them. The discussions, therefore, would be directed toward practical applications. Bi-lingual parents would be trained and supervised by the NAFICS Counselor to lead the study groups.

Home Visitation-Communication Specialist. The Home Visitation-Communication Specialist component is based upon the premise that behavior, rooted in attitudes and beliefs will change as a consequence of involvement and communication between parents and teachers, thus resulting in a more satisfying and productive school experience for students. Communication Specialist is the title given to low-income Native American mothers or fathers

who have taken part in NAFICS training.

The duties of the Communication Specialist would be: (1) improving home-school communication through home visitations, and (2) attempting to help teachers gain an understanding of low-income Native American pupils. The Communication Specialist and teacher would form a team for home visitation purposes. The NAFICS Counselor would train and supervise the Communication Specialists.

Parent Room. The Parent Room would be a resource room operated by paraprofessionals and open at stated times, including evening and weekend hours. The Parent Room would have pamphlets, books, slides and film strips chosen for their pertinence to the parents and children of the school.

Employment possibilities, to the extent of earning funds for school fees, are limited for many Native American youngsters. One function of the Parent Room would be to establish an "Employment Opportunities Center" for junior high and high school age youngsters. Civic agencies and private citizens in the surrounding community would be asked to cooperate in this endeavor.

The NAFICS Counselor would assume responsibility for the training and supervision of the Native American Parent Room Coordinators. Parent Room Coodinators would disseminate information and serve as liaison between family and school and family and community.

Health Services. Many low-income Native Americans, living in rural Oklahoma communities, lack information concerning and transportation to seek available health services. Indian hospitals are often located long distances from the rural community. A Community Health Nurse would be housed at the independent elementary school and make home visits in the community.

The NAFICS Community Health Nurse also would assess the health and nutritional needs of low-income Native American families residing in the rural areas. She would establish lines of communication for the purpose of disseminating pertinent public health information and world implement a

Community Health Progam in conjunction with teachers, para-professionals and other project staff.

Peer Counselors. The Peer Counseling component is based upon the assumption that Native American youth are more apt to confide in other Native American youth than non-Indian adults identified with the school. Five junior high and five high school age Native American youths would serve as Peer Counselors to other Native Americans. Peer Counselors would receive formal training for three weeks on the Oklahoma State University campus. The Peer Counselors would be supervised by the high school and elementary school counselors (if the schools have certified counselors) and/or the NAFICS Counselor.

Peer Tutoring. Five junior high and five high school age Native Americans youths would serve as Peer Tutors to other Native Americans. They would receive formal training for three weeks on the Oklahoma State University campus. The Peer Tutors would have the same exposure to a university environment as the Peer Counselors. The Peer Tutors would be supervised by a high school or elementary school teacher and/or the NAFICS counselor.

NAFICS Support System. The Support System for the Outreach and Contact Program of the NAFICS would be based at Oklahoma State University. Education services for school-age children are diversified but overlapping on the O.S.U. campus. The separate entitles are: (1) special education, (2) early childhood, (3) family relations, (4) speech and hearing, (5) reading, (6) school psychological services, (7) guidance and counseling services, and (8) educational administration.

Based on identified needs, support from these areas would be provided on a contractural basis. Two faculty member from the College of Education would be designated to coordinate the services provided by the Support System components. The schools involved in the implementation of NAFICS would serve as practicum and internship sites for selected graduate students from O.S.U.

Summary

Oklahoma is a Choctaw Indian word meaning home of the Red Man. The word is Indian and the heritage is Indian, yet in Oklahoma low-income Native American parents are too often silent bystanders in the educational experiences administered to their children. This has generated feelings of inadequacy, alienation and frustration which has ultimately led to feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. The NAFICS model is designed to assure that all voices can be heard and that the most beneficial balance of experiences are provided in all aspects of the operation of the public schools.

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